
Stories of Hope: Heart Failure



It was grandpa to the rescue when **Fred Lesikar's** granddaughter tried to put on a pair of jeans several sizes too small. The toddler was stuck. She could not pull them up, and she could not pull them off. Lesikar, then 59, stood on the cuffs of the jeans and began to lift her out of the pants.

But it hurt. Pain radiated across his back and around his chest. It ran through his biceps and up under his chin.

He should have called 911. He will tell you that now. Instead, he asked his stepdaughter to drive him to the hospital.

Help came too late to save his heart from permanent damage. He returned home much diminished. Walking around the block felt like a marathon, and he was losing the race.

Today, everything is different. "I'm in better shape than I've been in in years," he says. Some months after his attack, he enrolled in a clinical trial, in which researchers harvested a bit of tissue from his heart, coaxed stem cells from the tissue to grow, and put the cells back into his heart again. The results? Lesikar's heart is functioning better and the scar left from his heart attack appears to be reduced.

The study that helped Lesikar led to a more than \$19 million disease team award from CIRM to fund a clinical trial for the next generation therapy.

"It's given me a new life," Lesikar says. "The process, from the patient's point of view, is an easy, painless miracle, and I'm very thankful."

- Watch talks from the Spotlight on Heart Failure
- Read more about CIRM funding for heart disease research